EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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Epsom and Ewell FC form rising

13 March 2023

Pos		Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
1		Shoreham	25	17	7	1	69	22	47	58
2		Epsom & Ewell	26	17	3	6	58	31	27	54
3		Dorking Wanderers B	27	16	4	7	51	27	24	52
4		Wick	26	16	3	7	52	36	16	51

Epsom & Ewell FC 2-1 Montpelier Villa. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 11th March 2023

Some days they go in and some days they don't! Saturday's meeting with Montpelier Villa definitely fits into the latter category as we dominated proceedings throughout almost all of the match, creating a number of chances. However, only two of those were converted and it led to a bit of a nervy ending before we were able to properly celebrate clinching all three points.

With no information released by the club since Anthony Jupp resigned as Manager, but was then appointed Director of Football, it is still unclear whether Matt Chapman has the job now, or whether the club still intend to advertise for a replacement, or maybe have someone in mind. Either way, Chapman was in charge again for this match and despite the occasional flat period, we were good value for this win. Tom Theobald returned in goal, while Steve Springett came in at left back making his 50th appearance in place of the absent Kevin Moreno-Gomez. In fact we had three new defenders this week as Chris Boulter and Ollie Thompson were not available either, so Alex Penfold and Nick Wilson came in at the back and both looked solid there, even if Wilson would be somewhat harshly penalised later when being adjudged guilty of a foul in the penalty area.

Up front we were almost the same as for the Godalming match with one notable exception; Jamie Byatt coming into the starting eleven for the absent Mario Quiassaca and although Quiassaca had played fairly well on Tuesday, we just do not possess another goal scorer like the ageless Byatt. It is no surprise that he was part of the reason why we were able to cause so many threats in this match as everyone knows where he will be!

The match started off in a rather odd fashion when Penfold picked up the ball, explaining to the referee that he thought it was damaged! Luckily the referee saw common sense and the game restarted once the ball had been checked!

We pushed the visitors back in the early stages and the concern on the visitors bench was clear with many instructions being given out. Athan Smith-Joseph worked a clever one-two with Byatt, but his final delivery was beyond his incoming teammates. This was followed up by a good run from the right by Jaevon Dyer who set up Jaan Stanley for a low strike that was fairly comfortably saved.

However, we took the lead in the 18th minute in rather "Sunday League" circumstances as a long ball from (I think) Theobald straight up the middle was chased by Smith-Joseph who just got a toe to the ball ahead of the advancing Toby Gardner in the Villa goal, diverting it into the path of Byatt who finished off into the open net from inside the six yard box. The Villa Management tried to gee their young team up, but seven minutes later we doubled our lead and this came from the wing play of Dyer who beat his man and cut in before laying the ball back to Stanley, who flicked the ball on for Smith-Joseph to tap in from a yard.

A tactical substitution followed for the visitors in an attempt to stop the damage and in the 29th minute they were back in the game, admittedly against the run of play when Wilson was adjudged to have brought down a striker. Mayckoi Sabino tucked away the penalty, giving Theobald no chance and it was 2-1. If someone had told me at that point that we'd already seen all the goals for the day I'd have been extremely surprised, but that is how it turned out.

It wasn't for the want of trying though. Stanley saw his shot from Byatt's pull back well saved by Gardner and then in injury time Dyer's ball in was inches away from a full stretch Byatt.

The second half also started with a strange incident as Sabino was grappling with Gideon Acheampong for the ball. It was a physical battle and our man ended up on the deck with a free kick awarded in our favour, but for some reason the yellow card was waved at Sabino, when I really couldn't see any reason for it.

In the 56th minute after some more pressure Dyer just got his toe to the ball ahead of a challenge which then took him out in the penalty area, but he then blotted his copybook by sending the penalty Harry Kane style, just over the bar to the keeper's right! Byatt then headed over from eight yards before a much better downward header forced Gardner into a smart near post save with his legs.

After 68 minutes he gave way to new signing Lewis Pearch and the new man had a good opportunity in the 74th minute when a clever pass put him through, only for his shot to hit Gardner's right hand post with Ryan Smith striking the loose ball into the side netting from a wider angle.

Despite the chances being missed, we were still well in control and just needed to see the game out sensibly, which made it all the more frustrating when Gavin Quintyne spoilt his good performance with a comment to the referee that earned him his second visit to the sin bin in five matches. This was worrying because we absolutely couldn't afford to drop any points in this fixture, particularly after being so much in the ascendancy. Luckily we were still well in control through this period and Stanley was really unlucky to see his piledriver from over thirty yards just dip over the bar, clipping the top of the netting.

We added George Owusu and Owen Higgins also came on after some time out, although Higgins was guilty of a clumsy foul just outside the penalty area in the 92nd minute, which was a concern until Sabino sent it flying over our crossbar. Stanley, by now playing at left back after an injury to Springett had forced him off, and our final sub Theo Lukyamuzi both picked up yellow cards for time wasting and you wondered whether these would have happened had we scored a third goal earlier in the match. Lukyamuzi forced a final decent save out of Gardner in the 98th minute and finally after eight

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extra minutes we were all able to breathe a collective sigh of relief. Everyone in the ground knew we had been the better team and we were more than worthy of the win, but it was one of those matches where you just couldn't quite relax until it was all over!

Six matches, or more likely eight matches remain as we continue to aim for promotion and with Shoreham remaining four points ahead and holding a game in hand with a far superior goal difference, we have to be sensible here and accept that second place is a more realistic target. Still, we kept on course for that spot and on another day we might have substantially boosted our goal difference. Maybe next time!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Steve Springett, Ryan Smith (c), Alex Penfold, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Lewis Pearch for Byatt (68), George Owusu for Dyer (86), Owen Higgins for Springett (91) Theo Lukyamuzi for Smith-Joseph (93)

Epsom draw from the jaws of defeat

13 March 2023

Epsom & Ewell 2-2 Godalming Town. Southern Combination League – Division One. Tuesday 7th March 2023.

On Tuesday evening Epsom and Ewell and Godalming Town played out their first ever draw as we fought back from two goals down to force a share of the points on a chilly evening at Fetcham Grove.

We made three changes from the dramatic win at Selsey three days earlier with Toby McKimm getting a second game for us after his first was curtailed wrongly and prematurely at Hailsham Town, whilst Chris Boulter and Mario Quiassaca returned to the starting eleven at the expense of Nick Wilson and George Owusu who were on the bench but would both get involved later.

The first few minutes were in our favour, but in the seventh minute Jaevon Dyer gave away a needless free kick out wide. The original ball in was half cleared but was fed back in and Ollie McAleese was there to head the ball into the net from close range. We nearly equalised in the 15th minute when Athan Smith-Joseph's ball across goal took a deflection and almost bounced along the goal line, inches out of reach of the incoming Dyer.

There weren't many chances in this half really though, and the only other real items to note were a rather strange booking for Smith-Joseph, who appeared to be blocked by a defender, and then in the 35th minute when Ross Cheek was sent to the sin bin. We pushed a little more after that, but a Quiassaca ball across goal was behind Dyer and this summed up the first half really. As the teams went off at the half there was no disguising the fact that this was a fairly flat performance to this point, but a match that could still be won if we could improve. However, in the 58th minute a ball over the top of our defence was collected by Tom White who just got to the ball ahead of McKimm and lifted it over him and just below the bar despite attempts to clear by our defenders.

At 2-0 down we hadn't actually had a shot on target and I couldn't see a way back into the match. However, fairly fresh in the memory was the loss of a two goal lead at Selsey and our players clearly felt that if we could lose one there, we were just as capable of rescuing one too. However, a large amount of credit goes to our Assistant Manager Matt Chapman for making a triple substitution on the hour and changing the shape of the team. From this point we presented a much greater threat.

The next turning point in the match came in the 71st minute when we earned a corner which was met by a great header from Boulter which needed a good punch from Ryan O'Sullivan in the Godalming goal. However, the ball was recycled and fell to Boulter once again, standing on the eighteen yard line and he unleashed a fantastic volley into the top corner of the goal. Trust me, you won't see a better one in the Premier League this weekend, and what a way to score your first goal for the club!

At 1-2 down we had a sniff, particularly with Jamie Byatt now on the pitch and true to form he would have his say. Just before our equaliser though, Quiassaca had a shot blocked at close range after good work from Dyer, but in the 81st minute we saw some silky skills from Gavin Quintyne who took the ball out of defence and then sent the ball over the top of the Godalming back four for Quiassaca to chase. For some reason O'Sullivan had felt the need to come out to try and reach the ball first, but was nowhere near it and Quiassaca simply squared the ball for Byatt to finish into the vacant net from ten yards.

In the final seconds of the match we also saw a yellow card pointed in the direction of the Godalming bench and a final chance created by Wilson who set up Quiassaca, only for the ball to get caught up between his feet before being cleared. Still it was an entertaining final third of the match and a vastly more entertaining spectacle after the break than it had been before. Disappointingly though, only 64 were present to witness this match between two of the league's top five, although our club advertised the attendance as 91!! It is not clear why they feel the need to invent supporters and this constant fictional work embarrasses them as they are tampering with club history. Maybe they should treat the supporters they have a little better and they might actually pass the word! It's also about time they made a decision on the Manager, seeing as it's nearly a week since they announced that news would follow "soon". For what it's worth, Chapman and his team did their cause no harm in this match, should they be looking for the role.

I wrote a couple of weeks ago that if we could take seven points from this difficult three match stretch, we would be in pole position for the second place spot and that's exactly what we got! Whilst this draw does provide leaders Shoreham with some more breathing space at the top, we do look the most likely right now to claim that runners-up position with no clubs left to play in the top five now, assuming we can keep the standard up when we play the lower sides in the table.

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Epsom & Ewell: Toby McKimm, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Ollie Thompson, Chris Boulter, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Mario Quiassaca, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Nick Wilson for Smith (62), Steve Springett for Thompson (62), Jamie Byatt for Stanley (62)

Late winner points Epsom's way.

13 March 2023

Selsey 2-3 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 4th March.

Ultimately Saturday's League match at Selsey was decided by, and will be remembered for a 90th minute goal that should not have stood, but over the ninety minutes I felt we had done enough to secure the points and we were in fact cruising to a comfortable victory at one point. However, two goals in quick succession from the home side made reinvigorated the match as a contest and set up an entertaining finish, with the points going back up the A24 to Epsom.

I was told before the match that we had ten players out, although only two changes were made from the eleven who started our victory over Dorking Wanderers on Tuesday evening as Chris Boulter and Mario Quiassaca were missing, and they were replaced by George Owusu and Ryan Smith with Nick Wilson showing further versatility this week and playing alongside Ollie Thompson in the back four. We did look a little weaker on the bench though, with five named, although one was our other keeper Toby McKimm, and another was Jamie Byatt who wouldn't be participating due to injury.

With our Assistant Manager Matt Chapman taking charge of the side following the departure of Anthony Jupp, we made a bright start to proceedings, although the first real chance did fall to the home side when a corner was headed just over Tom Theobald's crossbar on the quarter hour mark. Following this, we went straight up the other end where Jaan Stanley delivered a peach of a cross from the left and Owusu met it with a side footed volley that crashed off the underside of the bar and out again.

Selsey had the ball in the net in the 17th minute, but the flag was up for offside and they had another shot on goal which was blocked by one of our defenders before Ollie Thompson picked up a yellow card that was more clumsy than malicious. From this point though we began to take control and Gideon Acheampong made a good run on the right to earn us a corner. From that Smith corner on the half hour Wilson flicked it on and Thompson met it four yards out with a bullet header that gave Syd Davies in the Selsey goal no chance whatsoever.

Owusu, Jaevon Dyer and Athan Smith-Joseph were asking a lot of questions with their direct running on a playing surface that was very much to their liking while Stanley buzzed around to good effect, just a day after his 21st birthday. Dyer was next to show with a run and strike that Davies parried to safety and we went in at the half with a deserved lead.

We started the second half well. Kevin Moreno-Gomez made tracks down the left before laying the ball back to Smith-Joseph whose curling shot was just tipped over the bar by Davies, although the corner was cleared. However, he wouldn't be denied on his fiftieth appearance for our club and after a spell of good pressure, the ball was fed across to Smith-Joseph again and he beat a man before casually clipping the ball just inside the far post from a step or two inside the penalty area in the 52nd minute. He was at it again a few minutes later with a delicious diagonal pass to Owusu who had beaten the offside trap, but with just Davies to beat, he took a really heavy touch and the ball ran through to their keeper. Next to cause trouble was Stanley who blocked a Davies clearance, but the ball rather luckily rebounded to a defender and was cleared.

In the 66th minute Theo Lukyamuzi joined from the bench for his debut, coming from Peterborough and the 49th player to play for us this season showed some good touches and pace in his spell on the left wing in relief of Owusu.

Moments later though we had our first scare for a while when a slide rule pass set Cian Griffin-Tilley through on goal, although Theobald stood up well and blocked his shot from close range. It was a great save but it clearly provided the home side with a spark as they began to up their work rate and force us back. Shane Brazil on the right wing was starting to give us a few issues with his clever wing play, and in the 77th minute Selsey had a goal back with a deep left wing cross that was met with a strike from James Henton from fairly close range. This was disappointing as we had looked like we'd be good for another clean sheet, but before we'd got our breath back a loose defensive header went straight into the path of Griffin-Tilley and he sent the ball under the advancing Theobald to level the scores up just two minutes later.

At this stage the home side had the momentum and Theobald had to make another save from Brazil's low shot before the controversial ending, which came in the 90th minute.

With the clock ticking down Davies in the Selsey goal had the ball at his feet and for some reason appeared to want to waste time and hang on for the draw which I thought was a bit odd after all they had done to get back in the game. However, Dyer was in to nick the ball away from him, although the ball then went out of play by about a foot before Dyer quickly knocked it back across the goal line. Davies appeared to look over for the Assistant at about the same time I did, only to see him around forty yards up the field, clearly anticipating that Davies had been going to pick the ball up and kick it downfield. He was in no position to see whether the ball had crossed the line and in that instant Dyer had turned to face goal and sent the ball towards the empty net from twenty yards. It wasn't totally clear if the ball was actually going in, but

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Thomas Blamire had no idea if there was someone behind him and he tried to block the shot, although he only succeeded in diverting the ball straight into the empty net.

The goal itself was hugely controversial though, as it should not have stood in the first place and with no time left for Selsey to recover the final whistle went soon after. We had taken all three points; a little fortuitously in the end due to the actual circumstances of the winning goal, but I felt we were the better side for much of the match and totally deserved our result against a team that had defeated leaders Shoreham in midweek. We now sit five points behind the leaders as a result of this win and have another difficult match against in-form Godalming Town on Tuesday, although it is worth noting that this will be our last match of the season against a current top five club. Shoreham's run-in is significantly more challenging with trips to Godalming, Dorking Wanderers B and a visit to Selsey. Maybe the title race isn't over just yet.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Ollie Thompson, Nick Wilson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, George Owusu, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Theo Lukyamuzi for Owusu (67), Kofi Quartey for Smith-Joseph (92)

Epsom and Ewell FC wandering to top table?

13 March 2023

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Shoreham	24	16	7	1	63	21	42	55
Epsom & Ewell	23	15	2	6	51	26	25	47
Dorking Wanderers B	25	14	4	7	44	26	18	46
Wick	24	14	3	7	49	36	13	45

Epsom & Ewell FC 1-0 Dorking Wanderers B. Southern Combination League – Division One. Tuesday 28th February.

As a supporter, it is sometimes easy to forget after an awful performance that the players are hurting too and on Tuesday evening they were able to consign that East Preston defeat to history with a fine 1-0 win over a Dorking Wanderers B team that we had failed to defeat since November 2018, courtesy of a Jaevon Dyer penalty that he earned himself midway through the first half.

And without doubt, despite much improved performances across the board, Dyer was the star turn in this contest, threatening on the attack and even putting in a good defensive shift when he was without the ball.

Dorking Wanderers B came into this match on the back of claiming thirteen points out of the fifteen available since the Christmas fixtures; a run that started at our expense at the start of January. However, this result enabled our boys to leapfrog them into second place and we were given an added bonus when unbeaten leaders Shoreham slipped up at home to Selsey the same evening, ensuring that they are not yet completely out of sight in the race for the title.

There were a number of changes from Saturday's defeat. Captain Ryan Smith was absent, while Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Oliver Thompson came back into the defence at the expense of Alex Penfold and Dylan Merchant-Simmonds who were on the bench. Dyer came back into the starting line up alongside Mario Quiassaca and the surprising re-appearance of Jaan Stanley, as the club had announced this week that he had been recalled by Raynes Park Vale! With these two on the field we appeared much more of a threat and started the game brightly.

Stanley's left wing cross was clawed away from danger by Jacob Teddy the visiting keeper as early as the third minute and although chances were limited in this period, the balance of play was well in our favour and it looked like if any team were going to score, it would be us. And so it proved when Athan Smith-Joseph made tracks on the left and his low ball in deflected upwards. As a defender went to clear the ball, Dyer got in front of him and was promptly brought down in the penalty area, picking himself up to score a confident penalty in the 26th minute; his first spot kick for the club and his first goal since finding the net against Billingshurst in October.

Dorking's only real opportunity of the first half came with a low shot that was deflected just wide of our post but the corner was cleared and we went in at the break without any more concerns.

We clearly weren't prepared to settle on that single goal lead as we came out for the second half and took the match to our opponents in search of that second goal. Smith-Joseph sent a low shot in after good work from Dyer but Teddy made an easy save and Dyer turned provider for Quiassaca a few minutes later, although again Teddy wasn't really tested when the shot came in.

We then fashioned a pair of really good chances and Smith-Joseph will be wondering how he didn't take one of them if not both. In the 61st minute Dyer made another great run on the right wing and his low ball across goal found our striker just six yards out, but his shot struck the post and went out for a goal kick. Then four minutes later Dyer again stretched the full back before laying the ball back to Gideon Acheampong to deliver to the far post where Smith-Joseph somehow sent his header wide from six yards!

This was a shame as we certainly deserved a second goal and the absence of one ensured that the final ten minutes would be a little more nervy than they needed to be, although we had one more good chance in that closing period when a clever flick from Quiassaca set Stanley through and he set up Dyer whose shot was well blocked.

Ultimately, Dorking Wanderers failed to carry a real threat on goal in the absence of their main striker Ben Aubrey and so our first half goal would prove sufficient to claim the points and gain a measure of revenge for our late loss there by the same score in January.

It seems odd to be talking about the Shoreham defeat on the same evening, when they remain eight points ahead of us

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with a far superior goal difference, even though we do hold a game in hand, as we have some very difficult matches ahead of us, not least Selsey on Saturday who will be flying after handing the leaders their first defeat of the season and where around 200 largely partisan supporters will be present to ensure their good form continues. However, we just need to focus on our own form and we'll see where that takes us. In the meantime, credit is due to our players for finally defeating a team that have given us a lot of trouble in recent seasons.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong (c), Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Nick Wilson, Chris Boulter, Ollie Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Mario Quiassaca, Jaan Stanley, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Rory Edwards for Dyer (86), George Owusu for Quiassaca (92)

Epsom and Ewell pressed on.

13 March 2023

Epsom & Ewell 1-2 East Preston. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 25th February.

Whatever happened to Fortress Fetcham Grove? Last season we won eleven in a row and this term we opened up with five straight wins. Yet nowadays, we are lucky if we can win any at all. Our win against ten man Arundel was the only one we have won since late October and our latest loss on Saturday against East Preston regrettably was almost identical to our last Saturday home match against Oakwood where our play was slow, lacking urgency and was completely toothless up front, allowing the opposition to believe they might have a chance, which they then took.

In terms of personnel there were further changes from the midweek win over Arundel and most notable was the absence of our prolific striker Jamie Byatt, who had of course scored the winner on Wednesday. Dylan Merchant-Simmonds came in for his first start and paired up with Chris Boulter at the back with Ollie Thompson moving to the bench, while Nick Wilson returned to the starting eleven after missing the Arundel match in place of the absent Thompson Adeyemi. George Owusu came in for his first start in place of the battered and bruised Jaevon Dyer who was placed on the bench in the hope that he would be able to have ninety minutes off before Tuesday's match against Dorking Wanderers, but he would also be forced into action as we chased the game in the later stages.

Finally, Tyreke Leslie came in, although due to the absence of Byatt he was placed in a more central position to that where we would previously seen him play and it didn't appear to suit him. It is strange that we have tried a number of players in that role from Josh Owen, Jubril Adamson, Josh Alder, Byatt, Dyer and most recently Jaan Stanley who was absent for this match, yet the guy who played there successfully in pre-season still hasn't been given a run at centre-forward in competitive action and so Athan Smith-Joseph instead lined up once again on the wing instead, although he was on the right for this match to accommodate Owusu on the left and this rendered him less effective than usual too.

The encounter settled into a fairly clear pattern as we held the ball most of the time, while the opposition relied on occasional counter attacks. Our first chance fell to Owusu in the tenth minute, but he hooked the ball over the bar from fairly close range and also struggled to stay onside in the first half. Leslie was on the end of a flick on, but his shot was deflected wide, according to the referee at least, as clearly the entire East Preston defence didn't agree, and regrettably the erratic officiating in this match would be another factor in this frustrating encounter.

We had forced a couple of corners and looked generally in control in these early stages, although a miscommunication between Alex Penfold and Merchant-Simmonds allowed Jack Collins to get through on goal. Fortunately, some good recovery defending ensured that their player was unable to get a shot away, however, this appeared to give the visitors some belief and they fizzed another ball across our six yard box before taking the lead in embarrassing circumstances in the 25th minute. I hope Gary Jarman got this one on his video as the players should watch it back again and again. Quite simply, a long throw was flicked on to the far post where Matthew Wilson was standing completely alone and seemed to have ages to guide his header past the helpless Tom Theobald from about six yards. It was the sort of goal you see conceded in the park on a Sunday morning and was horrible to witness from a club at our level.

We responded well and were back on level terms within three minutes as a Ryan Smith corner was blocked almost on the line and Owusu was there to tuck away the loose ball from a few yards out. In first half injury time both teams had an opportunity, first when Collins fed the ball through to Morgan Day, but his hooked volley went straight at Theobald, then at the other end Smith-Joseph produced one of his trademark mazy runs before unleashing a shot that was well tipped over by Maciek Kason, although Smith's corner then went straight out of play, which sort of summed up the first half.

Unfortunately the second half was an equally disjointed and dispiriting affair if you were an Epsom supporter. We had hardly been playing six minutes when we had a shout for a foul that wasn't given, but Gavin Quintyne felt the need to say something to the referee and ended up in the sin-bin as a result. His absence didn't materially affect the pattern of play and the scores were still level when he re-joined the contest, but it was ten minutes wasted as we created little in that period. Just after the hour Leslie was withdrawn and replaced by the returning Kofi Quartey and the visitors had another opportunity when a half cleared free kick was blazed over from the edge of the penalty area. A couple of bookings followed, firstly for Ryan Harvey and then extremely harshly for Wilson, who didn't even commit a foul as far as I was concerned.

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We sent in another corner where a Boulter header was blocked not far short of the goal line before Quartey had the chance of the afternoon after being put through one on one, but he overran the ball a bit and by the time he got the shot away, Kason was out to block. We would regret this ten minutes later when in the 86th minute a hopeful right wing cross appeared to be flicked on by one of our own defenders and fell kindly for the unmarked Harvey to fire a smart volley past Theobald from around ten yards. It was a good finish but the absence of any marking made the job somewhat easier.

Two minutes later and despite having previously seen Quintyne sin-binned, Boulter decided to also say something to the referee and predictably then found himself on the bench meaning that we would play the last two minutes and eight further minutes of injury time with ten men. I have referred to indiscipline in this team frequently this season, but to lose two “experienced” players for ten minutes each, was inexcusable. Yes, the refereeing was poor and yes, he looked out of his depth in this match, particularly in the second half, but our players have to be a bit more accountable for their own actions.

So East Preston won their fourth match in a row and deserve some credit for sticking around in the match that we should have finished off earlier, but let’s make no bones about this, both teams were poor in this match and it was a fairly disappointing advert for Step Six football. No wonder there were only 75 there to see it.

With just ten matches remaining, time is running out now and we have three far more difficult looking fixtures coming up against teams that are notably better than a limited East Preston. We face a difficult trip to Selsey at the weekend, and either side of that we host two in-form teams in Godalming Town and of course, our nemesis, Dorking Wanderers B coming up next. In my view (and hey, it’s my report!) we are very much at a crossroads here in our season. Which direction will we take? The path to second place in the table that we will surely claim if we are able to secure at least seven points from these next matches, or will we stumble erratically through the rest of the season before losing an away playoff match like we did last season. As a supporter, well aware that the club is spending a lot of money that is running out, I at the very least want to see better than what we witnessed here. Promotion to Step Five is still comfortably achievable, but not with performances like this. It has to stop now.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Ryan Smith (c), Chris Boulter, Dylan Merchant-Simmonds, George Owusu, Nick Wilson, Tyreke Leslie, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Kofi Quartey for Leslie (62), Jaevon Dyer for Owusu (68), Steve Springett for Penfold (77), Ollie Thompson for Smith (89)

Mulletts salted in table top match

13 March 2023

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Shoreham	22	16	6	0	61	18	43	54
Dorking Wanderers B	24	14	4	6	44	25	19	46
Epsom & Ewell	21	14	2	5	49	24	25	44
Godalming Town	22	12	5	5	46	26	20	41
Wick	22	12	3	7	45	36	9	39
Arundel	21	9	7	5	39	32	7	34

Epsom & Ewell 3-2 Arundel. Southern Combination League – Division One. Wednesday 22nd February.

In an important battle at the top end of the table, our boys came through a tense and tight encounter to take all three points from visiting Arundel, courtesy of a late winner from the evergreen Jamie Byatt in front of a disappointing crowd of 70, despite this Wednesday night match being one of very few played in the area.

Byatt, who surely will become the final Salts player to have been born before I started watching Epsom back in October 1981 rolled back the years and in his twenty minute cameo might have resulted in two goals, but an earlier effort was denied by a smart low save.

However, the real story here is that we have now recorded consecutive wins for the first time since October and this result against a team in good form and who drew with leaders Shoreham just four days previously is an indication that maybe our poor form over December and January can now be placed in the rear view mirror. Maybe though we should wait until our next two home matches against East Preston and our recent nemesis the Dorking Wanderers B team before we can be sure.

Sometimes though you just have to get the result, regardless of the performance and going into this match I felt it was important that we take at least a point against Arundel *(nickname the Mulletts)* to keep them at arm’s length in the play off race. The visitors probably also felt that a draw would have been a good result, but they will be kicking themselves for the way this match turned out, as they led and missed a few other chances before the match swung in our favour just before half time.

We took the field with two new debutants Tom Theobald in goal and Chris Boulter, the vastly experienced player slotting in at the back. Gideon Acheampong returned to the starting eleven after injury while Alex Penfold made his first start since returning to the club. The players missing out were the suspended Toby McKimm and the absent Steve Springett, Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Nick Wilson.

The opening encounters were fairly even. The visitors had the ball in the net in the fifth minute with a looping header, although the offside flag had already been raised. Then Ollie Thompson made an important clearance for a corner but from the resultant delivery in the fifteenth minute, Harry Russell marked his comeback for Arundel after suspension with

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a close range header that gave Theobald no chance.

In response Athan Smith-Joseph put in a dangerous low cross but we had no one gambling enough to attack the ball and it fizzed past everyone and out the other side of the six yard box. However, the visitors then had a great chance when the dangerous Carl Brown broke through on the right, but with just our keeper to beat, Theobald stood up well and eventually blocked the shot before the danger was cleared.

Jaevon Dyer was asking a few questions of the Arundel defence, but found himself on the receiving end of some fairly brutal treatment, firstly from Steve Herbert and then from Jordan Dudas who scythed him down with a two footed tackle that angered many of our players, although only resulted in a yellow card.

Penfold picked up a slightly harsh yellow as Brown seemed to throw himself at our man and then to the ground, but the real twist came in the 43rd minute. We started to put a little pressure on and from the edge of the penalty area Gavin Quintyne struck low into the corner; the ball grazing a defender's boot on the way in. This came as a bit of a surprise as the visitors had fashioned most of the chances to this point, but luck then turned our way too in the final minute of the half when a loose ball was picked up by Jaan Stanley and his shot was parried by Andy McCarthy, only to see the ball then strike an incoming defender and dribble over the line! This was the second time this season we have scored in such circumstances after Smith-Joseph's strike at Oakwood and like that goal, this will have to go down as an own goal, regardless of the club's rather hasty announcement that Stanley had scored. He will have to wait a little longer for his first goal in Epsom colours.

Most importantly and despite a fairly average forty-five minutes, we had turned this match around. A big second half was coming up although we'd need to do it without Penfold who was replaced at the break by Dylan Merchant-Simmonds with Gideon Acheampong moving over to left back. However, we seemed to look more solid with Brown providing much less of a threat in this half, and the ball spent much of the time in the middle of the park as the game became a little bit tighter. Harrison Mott then picked up a yellow card for Arundel following a high foot, although the referee appeared to indicate that it was for an accumulation of fouls.

We had a chance on the hour after good work from Smith-Joseph who pulled the ball back for Stanley, but his shot was blocked and cleared. Stanley had another chance when put through in the 66th minute and rode a high tackle which resulted in him being forced out wide and our bench demanding a free kick which may well have been followed by a red card as the player concerned was the last man back. Maybe our player was too honest and should have gone to ground, but the chance had gone.

Byatt joined the fray in the 68th minute for Smith-Joseph with Stanley moving out to the left to accommodate our fit again striker. However, we then had a major scare as an Arundel right wing cross was headed straight at Theobald who couldn't hold on to the ball and Tom Jefkins blazed the loose ball over from close range in the 69th minute. This was a real let off.

Dyer found himself on the deck once again after a blatant body check from Rob Madden which earned him a yellow card, and just three minutes later he was on the ground again after a collision with Mott off the ball. The Assistant clearly had a good view of the incident and flagged vigorously, advising the referee of what had happened, whereupon Mott then received a second yellow card. This incensed the visiting Management team and one of them was then the recipient of a straight red card as a result of his reaction. Dyer was the victim of some fairly unpleasant challenges in this match and it is hoped he is fit enough to go again on Saturday.

However, as we proved at Hailsham Town, you don't necessarily pack up just because you go down to ten men and from a free kick awarded some twenty-five yards out, Herbert curled a peach of a strike into the top corner of our net to level things up at 2-2 in the 80th minute.

With ten minutes to play the visitors appeared to be wanting to settle for a draw, as they slowed the game down a bit, but in the 83rd minute Stanley produced a good delivery for Byatt, whose shot was half blocked and then gathered by McCarthy almost on his goal line. You felt that a fully match fit Byatt might have given the keeper no chance, but he was there again two minutes later on the end of a great crossfield pass from Quintyne and his downward shot beat McCarthy at the near post and crept into the net to put us ahead for good. Theobald had one more shot to deal with, but he kept it out and after nearly seven minutes of injury time the whistle blew for full time.

A lot of people were very happy after our Hailsham win, particularly in view of the harshness of the early red card, but Hailsham were in a low position in the table and I felt that this match would provide a much better indicator of where we were. If you'd asked me at half time whether we had really turned the corner, I'd have said no, even though we had just taken the lead, as the first half wasn't great from an Epsom point of view. However, by the end of the match I felt we had done just enough to claim the three points, although you can't help but wonder what might have happened if the visitors scored a second goal when they were in the ascendancy. I'm sure they will have been wondering that too as they make the long journey home.

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Ryan Smith (c), Chris Boulter, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jaan Stanley, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Dylan Merchant-Simmonds for Penfold (HT), Jamie Byatt for Smith-Joseph (68), George Owusu for Dyer (80), Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (86), Tyreke Leslie for Stanley (86)

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10 man away win a turning point?

13 March 2023

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EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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29th October 2026

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Hailsham Town 2 – 4 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 11th February.

Cast your mind back to the 19th of November. It was the day we made our last visit into Sussex when we made the journey to Wick and came away with a 2-0 win. That was also the last time we won a match, so it's pleasing to report that we now have another positive result to our name after this 4-2 win at Hailsham Town.

What made the result even more impressive after this chaotic week at the club is that there were more new faces on show, replacing others who had departed, including a new keeper in Toby McKimm. However, he was harshly sent off after just 27 minutes of his debut and the ten men, including emergency keeper Nick Wilson managed to produce the goods when we really needed it.

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
1	Shoreham	21	16	5	0	60	17	43	53
2	Dorking Wanderers B	23	13	4	6	40	24	16	43
3	Epsom & Ewell	20	13	2	5	46	22	24	41
4	Wick	22	12	3	7	45	36	9	39
5	Godalming Town	20	11	5	4	41	23	18	38

http://www.scfl.org.uk/tables.php?comp_id=2

McKimm was not the only player making his debut this week as new signing from Raynes Park Vale Jaan Stanley played up front and later on George Owusu from Sutton Common Rovers would come on to score on his first appearance.

We were missing Gideon Acheampong, Jamie Byatt and Johnny Akoto who were all advised as injured, while Josh Owen became the latest player to leave the club. Also on the bench was the returning Alex Penfold; a decision which surprised me, but will have annoyed other supporters, given his sending off and subsequent suspension and release from the club last season. I have always found Alex to be a decent chap, but bearing in mind the tumultuous events of the previous match against Oakwood, his arrival just in time for the next one could definitely have been timed better.

With Steve Springett coming in for the released Aaron Bogle, Kevin Moreno-Gomez retained his position at left back, while Wilson played at right back for the first time, although of course, not for that long as it turned out and later on the spot would be filled by another unlikely full back in Jaevon Dyer.

Another knock to our club history and traditions occurred when we took the field in our red third kit, seeing as our club colours have been blue for 105 years, and on a pitch likened by one of our supporters to a crumpet, the ball took a number of odd hops and bounces so it was clear that passing football was not going to be the order of the day. We would have to be a little more direct. We had a little scare on the quarter hour mark when the home side sent the ball in from the right, but the striker failed to make a decent contact and it drifted wide of McKimm's goal. A Ryan Smith corner was headed on, but over the bar by Springett at the near post before Ryley Tate picked up an early booking for a cynical trip on Athan Smith-Joseph with just eighteen minutes on the clock.

Two minutes later we nearly went ahead in bizarre circumstances. The referee allowed a good advantage and Smith-Joseph attacked down the left wing, with his low ball in being deflected onto the post by George Whitley and then out for a corner. However, from the corner in the 21st minute we went ahead anyway after Smith's corner was met by the giant Adeyemi and his header landed at the feet of Stanley who simply laid it back for Ollie Thompson to poke the ball into the opposite corner from around six yards out to register his first goal for our club.

Unfortunately celebrations were short lived as just four minutes later a harmless enough long ball led to a miscommunication between Thompson and McKimm and under pressure from a Hailsham striker an arm struck the ball just outside the area, for which McKimm would receive his marching orders a couple of minutes later. However, the view I was given by a number of people nearer the incident than I advised that the Hailsham player pushed Thompson into the ball where his arm then knocked the ball. Either way, it appears that McKimm was harshly dealt with and Wilson then took over between the posts; a job I'm told he had done before at Croydon in similar circumstances. Our defenders would protect him fairly well in this match, but he did well when called upon.

The resultant free kick was deflected off our wall for a corner amidst some appeals for a penalty and the corner was then cleared to Smith-Joseph, standing just inside his own half, from where he promptly ran fifty yards at goal from an angle down the right wing and from about twelve yards out literally lashed the ball as hard as he could past Ed Cooper and into the roof of the net for our second goal with 29 minutes on the clock. It was a fantastic strike and provided that little cushion a team needs when it is low on confidence and down by a player. The game continued in a fairly stop start fashion until the break with the only notable item to report being a yellow card awarded to our Manager in the 41st minute, presumably for something he said.

As the second half got going Adeyemi picked up an early yellow card for a handball, but the match settled into a pattern, with the home side trying to break through, but not having much success. Wilson was forced into a decent save in the 67th minute from a shot out on the right, with the rebound bouncing up a little too far for the incoming striker who couldn't keep the shot down from close range.

In the 73rd minute though, we saw another brilliant goal as Smith-Joseph fed Dyer on the overlap and his cross was met

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by a stunning scissor volley from Adeyemi which flew into the roof of the net from fifteen yards to become the second Epsom player in this match to register his first goal for the club and put us three – nil up.

And another would follow as Owusu forced in a great low Smith-Joseph cross six minutes later after only being on the field for nine minutes. However, in between these strikes Hailsham had pulled a goal back through Tate after the ball reached him a few yards out after Wilson and / or a defender had done well to keep the original threat out, with a little help from a post in the 77th minute.

The final words went to the home side as Luca Bish, better known to younger supporters as a partner of footballer Michael Owen's daughter Gemma on TV's Love Island in 2022, but this time he did manage to score! It was another decent strike from just inside the area and gave Wilson no chance, although with the clock already showing the third minute of injury time, there was to be no further fightback and the match ended in a 4-2 victory to maintain our perfect record at the Beaconsfield of four wins from four visits dating back to 1993.

This result may just re-start our season on the field and may prove to be one of the most important results of the year when we look back.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby McKimm, Nick Wilson, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Steve Springett, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jaan Stanley, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Alex Penfold for Moreno-Gomez (51), George Owusu for Stanley (70), Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (81)

Poor play spoilt by "Cantonesque" antics

13 March 2023

Epsom & Ewell FC 1-2 Oakwood, Southern Combination League – Division One. Saturday 4th February 2023.

Ten weeks to the day since we last had a League contest on a Saturday and nearly five since we had a match of any kind, we emerged from our hibernation with an absolute shocker of a performance as we lost 2-1 to Oakwood; a team we had beaten by five clear goals on their own ground in August and who were sitting in the bottom four of the table. This was our fifth defeat in a row, which represents our worst run of form since 2019 and our first defeat on this date since 1995 after six previous straight wins.

Unfortunately, this awful performance is only one half of the story as our club's name was sullied further by a frightening incident at half time when one of our players chose to leave the field of play to "have it out" with a spectator, who just happened to be the father of our goalkeeper Kamrun Zain. He was then promptly and correctly sent off by the referee whilst both were actually standing in the main body of terracing on the clubhouse side of the ground; a quite bizarre sequence of events quite unprecedented in our club's history.

But back to the start. The club had heralded the arrival of three players in the last few days, yet none of them were in the squad, while our Coach Jack Porter was named as one of the subs, which, with no offence to Jack, usually happens when we are short. The irony here was that only one man actually made his debut in the starting eleven, Thompson Adeyemi and the club hadn't ever mentioned him joining! Our Manager Anthony Jupp was unavoidably absent for this match so Matt Chapman and Kevin Espinosa took charge in the dugout.

Despite our healthy league position and the fact that we had been without competitive football for so long, only 84 were present on a perfect day for football and it was a shame that there was so little of it on display. The club described the figure in their brief report as "good", but on a day when mid table Selsey registered 192, and with title rivals Shoreham getting 182 at home the week before, I would beg to differ. We were missing our main striker Jamie Byatt, Ben Bauchop and Johnny "Sonic" Akoto while Ryan Smith took over the armband, following the departure of Brad Peters to Step Five Broadbridge Heath, where according to our Chairman's programme notes he is now playing Step Four football! There was no Josh Alder to take Byatt's place after he joined Alfold and so Josh Owen took on the central striker's role.

The first half was without doubt, the worst forty-five minutes supporters will have witnessed at this club this season as we failed to impose ourselves in any way against a team that were extremely limited in their ambitions at first, and understandably so, following our August win and a 6-0 drubbing last time they visited us. However, it became apparent after around fifteen minutes that we were only able to play one way; sideways, followed by balls down the flanks to either Athan Smith-Joseph or Jaevon Dyer, both of whom failed entirely to create a single delivery of note for Owen. With few other midfielders appearing willing to join the attacks, they were seen off with relative comfort.

Nick Wilson sent a powerful shot over the bar after Dyer's pull back to the edge of the area, but in the 23rd minute the visitors took the lead from a completely innocuous free kick way out on their left flank. The ball in looked like it would reach Zain, but Adil Raman nipped in front and poked the ball past our keeper from eight yards. Whose fault was this? It's hard to know for certain, but the absence of the commanding presence of Peters was instantly noticed as no one took charge of the situation and we paid for it.

This was concerning. Neither team had really looked like scoring to this point and it was a horribly frustrating half of football to watch as passes went astray. Oakwood were no better, but for a team like ours with substantial experience of playing at a higher level it was extremely disappointing to witness nobody really taking control of the situation. The

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referee was also being a bit fussy by this time and Wilson and Owen both received warnings for complaining about decisions before the latter picked up a petulant yellow card for raising his boot to try and block a goal kick; the sort of thing you learn not to do in kids football.

The whistle blew for half time and the crowd began to conduct its own post-mortems. However, something was going on in the opposite corner of the ground to me. It transpired that a spectator had been loud and abusive throughout the first half, so much so that it could be heard on my side of the pitch by some spectators. Most of the abuse being given out was in the direction of Aaron Bogle, and it was from our keeper's father who was clearly upset with some of the communication Bogle was giving to his son between the posts. As the players went off for the break it spilled over and although Bogle was originally escorted away from the area, he returned and confronted the spectator on the terracing with an altercation between them resulting right in front of a number of our supporters, some of whom feared for their safety.

Almost out of nowhere the referee appeared and he had no alternative but to send our player off for this atrocity. There is no excuse for leaving the field of play, even under provocation and we await further news of what further actions will follow, once the referee's report is studied.

The second half commenced, quite probably with many people being completely unaware of what had actually happened while they had their half time pints! Strangely, despite being a man down we were actually better in the second half, although admittedly that wasn't hard to achieve! Smith-Joseph was much more prominent in this period and was involved in most of the attacking threats we created, setting up Dyer for a low shot in the 50th minute which was just wide. A corner shortly afterwards was met by an Owen header that was well tipped over by the Oakwood Captain, Andrew Graves and then Smith-Joseph's ball in was only punched clear to Adeyemi in space just fifteen yards out, but his powerful strike at goal flew inches over the crossbar and hit the facia of the Bernard Edwards stand instead.

Almost immediately we paid for this miss as the visitors scored a second goal, when from just short of forty yards Darrell Agyemang spotted Zain a little off his line and struck the ball over him and into the net in the 65th minute. It was a superb goal and the absolute highlight of a match of such low quality. In response, we threw on Musa Beegun for his debut and Gavin Quintyne and in the 76th minute we had a goal back as Beegun and Dyer linked well before threading the ball to the advanced Gideon Acheampong. His deep cross caught Graves out and looked like it may go in on its own, but the ball was bundled over the line by Smith-Joseph who admitted after the match that it may have gone in off his arm!

Our winger almost scored again after a wild defensive pass went straight to him in the 86th minute, but his shot was well blocked and cleared. The Oakwood bench made it quite clear to their player what they thought of the wayward pass as it had nearly cost them two points, but apart from a late Wilson header that just missed the far post, we were all out of ideas and Oakwood claimed all three points to give them an excellent chance of escaping relegation.

I wrote after the Chessington defeat that we had worked hard to get up the League, but that another poor performance would not receive such a forgiving report. Quite simply this one was completely unacceptable to our extremely patient supporters and bearing in mind that our visitors are one of many clubs in this league without a playing budget, our players should be handing their wages back after this one. There was not a single redeemable feature to take from this match, yet worryingly, this was not the worst part of the day.

So what happens now? Well, for starters I can advise that our keeper has chosen to leave the club, as a screenshot of his message saying so was put out on social media in the last 24 hours. Maybe this is not a surprise, but either way, our Manager will have his hands full finding replacements in time for our trip to Hailsham Town next weekend. Be clear of one thing though. Promotion from the play offs is not the biggest disaster, particularly as Shoreham are now way clear of us at the top. However, further performances like this one will see us start to slip out of the playoff positions, which would not be acceptable to supporters.

What happens to Aaron Bogle is less clear as I write this some twenty-four hours after the event. Our club have belatedly put out a statement advising that the incident was unacceptable and will be dealt with accordingly. You would therefore draw the conclusion from this that he is to be released, but it is bizarre in the extreme that this hasn't happened yet. It is easy to think back to December 2021 when the club's decision to release Alex Penfold was publicised within a couple of hours of that match being abandoned, yet in my opinion, this Cantona-esque episode was worse and can only result in his release and subsequent long period of reflection from the sidelines. Concerningly, and as evidence of the club's disjointed Media policy, there is no appearance of the statement on the club's "official" website, and literally just one sentence in its match report covering the half time fracas, almost as if the club want to bury things and pretend they didn't exist. Our club seem quite simply unable to grasp the situation and the number of times they have "read the room" wrongly is embarrassing in the two and a half years since the "new regime" and its new culture came in.

At a time when our club is about to ask for help from its supporter base with reference to its plans for the Hook Road Arena sporting hub, this club cannot afford to have such a situation hanging over it. Supporters at the game genuinely feared for their safety and I have had a number contacting me to express their disgust and explaining how the matter could have been handled better. Rather oddly I have also seen one occasional supporter has commented along the lines that the club could do no more at this time than to issue what was a vague and poorly written statement. That is their opinion, but I vehemently disagree with it. The Surrey FA will be watching and waiting for an extremely quick response here as charges will surely follow and our club's reputation needs to be protected. We need to be doing something and should have done this already.

This horrible incident at what tries to portray itself as a family and community club could and should have been prevented by its officials. Committee members advised supporters that they had not heard the extremely loud abuse going on during the first half, but this is hard to believe as evidenced by people hearing it across the other side of the ground. Then, when it all happened, the player was removed from the area rapidly enough, but the supporter was not. In fact, he then wandered to the other side of the pitch. The person concerned was finally escorted from the ground by our Vice-Chairman Barry Gartell midway through the second half, but the moment he walked away from the entrance, the supporter just

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walked back in and watched the remainder of the match.

Epsom & Ewell: Kamrun Zain, Gideon Acheampong, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Oliver Thompson, Aaron Bogle, Jaevon Dyer, Nick Wilson, Josh Owen, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (72), Gavin Quintyne for Owen (72)

Landlord thrashes tenant in friendly fight

13 March 2023



Epsom and Ewell FC 0-5 **Leatherhead FC** – Mid-Season Friendly – Saturday 21st January. An Epsom and Ewell team that hadn't played a match for nearly three weeks came up against a Leatherhead side that had played fairly regularly during that period and in front of a crowd of 79, the score line of 5-0 to our opponents came as no real surprise.

With our League match against Arundel postponed, a friendly against our landlords on the artificial surface at River Lane, Fetcham was hastily arranged and kicking off at 2pm we gave a run out to our new signings Roan Strong, Musa Beegun and Rory Edwards while the majority of our regulars all played too, but for large parts of the game we found chances extremely limited. A change in formation just after the half hour made things a little more even for a while, but by then we were already two goals in arrears and three more followed in the second half.

The first goal came courtesy of a slight deflection, enabling the ball to creep past the wrong footed Strong in the 13th minute and a second followed after a great turn from the Leatherhead 10 which put him through to find the 9 with a good pass and he guided the ball past Strong into the bottom far corner.

The second half produced a slightly harsh score line for us as the Leatherhead keeper made three superb saves in the second half, two of which came from Nick Wilson, but to be fair, they also had other chances that weren't taken and could have had a couple more themselves. The third goal came in the 49th minute and was harsh on Strong who made a good save, only to see an opponent reach the loose ball first for a simple finish. A spectacular fourth goal then followed in the 67th minute with a strike from the edge of the penalty area that grazed the bar on its way in. All we had in response was one near post shot from Athan Smith-Joseph after he had received a long kick from Strong, but the keeper kept it out.

We then had three chances in a minute; the 75th, as it turned out. Firstly, Wilson struck at goal with a slight deflection on the way, requiring a great full stretch save to claw the ball away. From the corner, Thomson Adeyemi's header from point blank range was also kept out and the from the next corner Aaron Bogle struck over the bar from just inside the box.

A great deep cross from Athan Smith-Joseph was met by a superb volley from Wilson, but this was also acrobatically kept out by the Leatherhead keeper and an 86th minute penalty from Junior Kadi, after Bogle had brought a striker down just inside the area, completed the scoring. You couldn't argue with the decision and seeing as the referee was our former Captain Alex McKay, it is only fair to say that he had an excellent game.

We now face another two weeks without a competitive match before hosting Oakwood, but this should give time for our new signings to become a little more familiar with the rest of the players as we finally commence the second half of our season against teams of not such a high standard.

Epsom & Ewell: Roan Strong, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Gideon Acheampong, Ryan Smith, Oliver Thompson, Aaron Bogle, Athan Smith-Joseph, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Josh Alder, Gavin Quintyne

Subs: Rory Edwards, Thomson Adeyemi, Musa Beegun, Josh Owen all on for Quintyne, Smith, Alder, Wilson (at HT) Lawrence O'Donoghue for Acheampong (62), Wilson back on for Byatt (69), Quintyne back on for Akoto (81)

Caught hook, line and sinker

13 March 2023

Epsom & Ewell FC 1 – 3 Chessington & Hook United – Southern Combination League – Division One – Tuesday 27th

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December.

Oh no! Not Chessington again! Historically, we have a superior won lost record against our opponents, yet this defeat was our sixth at home in the last eight encounters dating back to our days at Merstham. Indeed the last fifteen matches between these two clubs have produced just ONE home win between them, which I suppose bodes well for our return fixture at Chalky Lane in April! Seriously though, most of our home defeats against them have followed a similar pattern that we seem to struggle with, regardless of our playing personnel or Management; that of a team defending solidly as a unit at the back, working energetically to deny space and pinching their chances when they came.

Equally worryingly, we have started to see a similar script occurring in home matches. Worthing United and Deportivo Galicia also conceded first, yet we have allowed all of these teams back into the match from a position of strength and appear to be unable to stop them once they have gained their own momentum. We have not won at home since 29th October and this is not going to be good enough if we are to remain at the top of the table for much longer. Indeed we are now clinging to that position on goal difference alone, with the imposing threat of Shoreham now looming large in our rear view mirror.

So, if not exactly a terminal hammer blow to our title hopes due to the strong position we had created in recent months, Tuesday's defeat must have sent some very large alarm bells ringing across the club and the next couple of matches will give supporters an indication of whether it has been heeded.

I referred in my match preview to the kick off being delayed an hour to 12pm instead of the traditional 11am and how much this decision might cost us financially. Our attendance, independently counted by two people from two different positions in the ground was 127 (although the club advised 138 in their official figures). Either way, Forest Row v Oakwood (at 11am) recorded 113, well over double the average attendances for those clubs and this was noted on Twitter by Oakwood with comments as to how their ground had been swelled by a large number of ground hoppers. It is conjecture of course, but for our often feisty and entertaining local derby at a venue with great facilities, close to a train station and motorway on a Bank Holiday when there were very few other local matches, you have to wonder how many of those extra sixty or seventy supporters would have chosen to come here instead, but chose not to because of the added difficulty in getting to a 3pm kick off after our game as many of these floating supporters tend to do, and that's not including people who didn't fancy the trip to Sussex, but who might have come here. This was an opportunity to get close to, if not over 200 missed by our club and is a lesson we must learn quickly. Moving the fixture back a day from Boxing Day = "A Plus – great idea". Moving the kick off back by an hour = "E Minus – Could do better".

In terms of personnel, there were a few changes from our defeat last Wednesday. Aaron Bogle and Zach Powell returned at the back, while Brad Peters was missing, so Gideon Acheampong took the Captain's armband on and moved into the centre of defence with Johnny "Sonic" Akoto coming in at right back. Further forward Athan Smith-Joseph and Jaevon Dyer returned to the starting eleven in place of Josh Owen who was absent injured, and Steve Springett, Josh Alder and Ryan Smith, who would have to wait for their opportunities from the bench.

And things started well once again. Smith-Joseph skipped down the wing in the opening twenty seconds and his ball into the danger area caused panic, leading to a corner. However, our service would be particularly poor in this match and the delivery was weak. Then Smith-Joseph made a great exchange of passes with Nick Wilson who then set up our winger for a shot, but he delayed it after drawing the keeper and was smothered out by Chessington defenders. Dyer's shot was then deflected wide for a corner but in the 11th minute a visiting striker broke through and we were fortunate that he shot directly at Kane Charles who made the save.

Our next attempt involved a good run from midfield by Gavin Quintyne, but Chessy keeper Andrew Osei was out quickly to save after our man had received a Smith-Joseph pass. We then took the lead in the 21st minute. A ball down the right found Jaevon Dyer who made tracks before pulling the ball back to Quintyne. Feeling confident after his super strike on Wednesday, he took aim from just inside the penalty area, but only side footed the ball towards Osei who strangely failed to gather the ball and experienced goal poacher Jamie Byatt nipped in to lift the ball over the stretching keeper from close range to score his 35th goal for us in 35 appearances; a stat that moves him onto our club Hall of Fame chart for the top fifty scorers on our history.

Byatt was just wide with a header from a free kick shortly after this and we looked good value for our lead. Byatt then shrugged off a weak challenge on the half hour and was through on goal, but the referee called him back for a foul which looked very harsh. It was a pity as he would probably have given us a two goal lead, yet in the 33rd minute the visitors were back in the game with an equaliser. The play built up well on the right and we got dragged over a little, so that when the ball was sent over, Aaron Cole-Bolt had time to control the pass and get it onto his right foot before drilling the ball into the bottom far corner from just inside our penalty area.

It was not a deserved equaliser at the time, but by the time the half time whistle had blown they were in the ascendency and Ben Bauchop's attempt from 40 yards then went way wide of the goal just before the break gave a hint as to how the play had been going. Interestingly at half time the Chessington team were back out after just a few minutes and were doing a bit more ball work. They seemed to want to send a message that they were keen and eager to fight for the points. Having said that, we were the first team to fashion a good chance just a few seconds into the second half when a short corner between Dyer and Bauchop resulted in a shot from the latter that deflected to Byatt some eight yards out, but his snap shot on the turn cannoned back off the Chessington crossbar and away to safety.

This chance would come back to haunt us as soon as the 50th minute when they broke away after being pushed back and a right wing delivery to Cole-Bolt was struck at goal, only to rebound kindly for former Salt Hakim Griffiths to slot home the loose ball past our helpless keeper from a few yards. This was such a frustrating goal to concede and our heads appeared to visibly drop.

We would still make chances for a while though and Smith-Joseph did well on the left, having switched wings with Dyer, but his pull back was just behind the incoming Byatt before Byatt himself had a shot at goal but his connection wasn't the strongest and provided an easy save for Osei, who was by this time beginning to waste a lot of time and picked up a

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yellow card for time-wasting shortly after. Smith-Joseph then provided a mazy run, beating three men before seeing his shot deflected for another corner which came to nothing.

We made a few substitutions but the pattern of the game was changing more in favour of the visitors and we only created one real chance after this when Byatt chased a through ball in the final minutes, forcing a poor clearance from Osei, but Ryan Dacres-Smith was unable to take advantage of the vacant net from thirty yards out with his attempt at goal not getting past a covering defender. Of course, by then we had already conceded a third goal in the 78th minute when a ball in from the right found another former Salt in space, Fabian O'Brien and he guided the ball past Charles and into the far corner from ten yards. It is notable that a lot of recent goals conceded have come from the opposition right hand side and as with our previous loss to Deportivo Galicia it is my opinion that their winger was the best player on the park, in this case Ben Anderson, giving us a lot of trouble throughout the match. However, we have looked extremely vulnerable at the back recently, with as many goals conceded this week (seven) as we have in the previous nine matches, and this must be a real concern.

Those who regularly read my reports will know that I am honest and critical where required and for sure this was a poor performance, although 3-1 was a flattering score line. However, It is more important to see how our group of talented players respond before being too harsh. After all, we are top of the table still, so many things are being done well. Next up though is another opponent we have had terrible struggles with in recent years, the Dorking Wanderers B team at the new Meadowbank; a ground we haven't won competitively at since it was rebuilt. If that challenge, added to our performance here doesn't motivate a good response, then maybe the next report won't be so forgiving.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Zach Powell, Ben Bauchop, Gideon Acheampong (c), Aaron Bogle, Jaevon Dyer, Nick Wilson, Jamie Byatt, Gavin Quintyne, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Steve Springett for Powell (65), Ryan Dacres-Smith for Dyer (73), Ryan Smith for Akoto (73), Oliver Thompson for Bauchop (83)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Lost in the fog

13 March 2023



Epsom & Ewell 2-4 FC Deportivo Galicia – Surrey Premier Cup – Second Round – Wednesday 21st December 2022.

A contest that started in farcical circumstances and ended in fairly thick fog ended with our opponents clinching this Surrey Premier Cup tie with three late goals to progress 4-2 in their defence of the trophy in front of a pitiful independently counted attendance of 46.

The most disappointing aspect of this contest was that we had done the hard work to take a deserved lead towards the end of the match, only to then throw it away with some horrible defending.

We were missing a few players from the regular squad in Zach Powell, Oliver Thompson, Johnny Akoto, Aaron Bogle, and Kevin Moreno-Gomez, who were all absent, while Kane Charles came back in between the posts for Kamrun Zain. On the bench we had the returning Mario Quiassaca and also a new debutant in Ryan Dacres-Smith, not to be confused with Ryan Smith, who was back in the starting line up after spending the Dorking Wanderers B match on the bench. This meant that Nick Wilson played in the back four for the first time while Steve Springett played his first match since completing his suspension.

The match was delayed to an 8pm start because the visitors had only eight players at the arranged kick off time of 7.45. Even when the match finally commenced at 8.06 FC Deportivo Galicia took the field with ten men, although an eleventh joined them in the third minute. A full bench of substitutes were named, but only one in playing kit ever appeared there.

And with Matt Chapman in charge due to the absence of our Manager Anthony Jupp, we could and should have gone ahead in the third minute when a poor clearance from the keeper presented Jamie Byatt with a chance, but his shot from 15 yards went wide. Two minutes later we absolutely should have opened our account after a delightful pass from Gavin Quintyne was perfectly in stride for Josh Owen, clean through on goal, but he hurried his shot straight at the advanced keeper, only to then have the ball rebound kindly back to him, yet with an open goal in front of him from 18 yards, he scuffed his shot which was then cleared by a defender and also seemed to injure his groin at the same time, which ultimately led to his replacement just before half time.

All of that didn't seem important at the time though as we took the lead in the ninth minute anyway when a poor clearance went straight to Josh Alder who set up Byatt to bury his shot low into the bottom corner from just inside the penalty area. The visitors, maybe understandably after their difficult journey, looked all at sea, but against the run of play they then equalised in the 12th minute as their right winger was allowed too much space at the far post and his shot from an angle took a wicked deflection off Springett onto Charles' left hand post and across into the far side netting.

Despite the goal, we continued to do most of the pressing and Alder's shot was fumbled before a Springett overlap and

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dangerous delivery appeared to be sent goalwards by a defender where the keeper made a fantastic double save, firstly from the defender and then secondly to claw the ball away as Byatt lunged for the loose ball.

However, after 20 minutes of dominance the pattern of the match began to shift and the visitors looked the more dangerous as the remainder of the half played out. Springett did well to block a dangerous chance after a Charles clearance had gone to the opposition. They then had another shot at goal, only to hit a team mate and just before the break Charles made a good low save as the shot came in from just outside the box. As the half concluded, Dacres-Smith came on for the limping Owen and it is hoped that the injury is not a serious one.

The second half started with little wisps of mist starting to appear above the pitch which would get worse as the evening progressed but fortunately we were back on top again. In fact a large part of this second half consisted of through balls against a Deportivo high line which our boys would chase, only for the sweeper keeper to kick the ball clear. It wasn't a perfect plan though and Byatt broke the offside trap in the 49th minute, but his ball in was met by an Alder shot that lacked power and dribbled wide. Then it was Byatt's turn to slice wide after Smith had broken through with a well timed run two minutes later, but pressure was building and Quintyne was desperately unlucky to see his shot from 20 yards crash down and away off the crossbar with the loose ball not coming down in time for Byatt who headed the ball wide as he ran in.

The visitors were creating little to this point and Byatt broke through once again, only for his touch to let him down. Charles needed to make a good save after Wilson lost the ball at the back, but by and large it appeared just a matter of time before we took the lead.

Finally it came in the 72nd minute when a corner was headed out to the edge of the box where Quintyne hammered a rocket back past the keeper into the roof of the net. It was a superb strike which deserved to win any match, but maybe our players thought that it was won at this point, because from this point we switched off and four minutes later a close range finish enabled the opposition to draw level out of nowhere.

Brad Peters flicked a low corner towards goal, only to see the ball cleared off the line, but Charles was forced to tip a powerful shot over the bar as Deportivo began to fancy their chances of pinching the match and on the break that's exactly what they did after an 86th minute shot was originally blocked before the loose ball was forced in. Six minutes later another ball in from the right wing was tapped in at the far post to make the final score 2-4.

We had a couple of chances in the closing minutes with Quiassaca forcing two good saves out of the visiting keeper, but in the end we had to admit defeat and face the fact that we have just sixteen league fixtures remaining in our season now, assuming that we can avoid the need for the playoffs. However, on this performance, that looks unlikely and a massive improvement will be required before we face Chessington & Hook United on Tuesday; a team we have only beaten once at home in our last seven meetings.

Epsom & Ewell: Kane Charles, Gideon Acheampong, Steve Springett, Ryan Smith, Nick Wilson, Brad Peters, Ben Bauchop, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Josh Alder, Josh Owen

Subs: Ryan Dacres-Smith for Owen (44), Athan Smith-Joseph for Alder (66), Jaevon Dyer for Acheampong (71), Mario Quiassaca for Byatt (74)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

World Cup injury time knocks Epsom and Ewell out of local cup

13 March 2023

Dorking Wanderers B 2-1 Epsom & Ewell FC – Southern Combination League Division One Cup – Second Round – Saturday 3rd December 2022.

A controversial 97th minute winner from Ben Aubrey secured passage through to the Quarter-Final of the Division One Cup for Dorking Wanderers B and denied our boys the chance to repeat their run to the Final from last season.

I'm not sure what it is about these two teams, but they seem to bring out the worst in each other! Although a neutral might well have enjoyed this match; played at speed, full of commitment, heavy challenges and erratic refereeing, this was a frustrating encounter to witness as an Epsom supporter.

To me, it seemed like these teams always cancel each other out and this contest had very few real chances of note within the ninety minutes before the home side scored a late winner, that numerous sources told me was offside in the build up.

It was clear from the starting line up that our Management had chosen to give a few of our regulars some time off for this cup tie. Before this match three players had taken part in all of our previous twenty matches, yet none of them even took the field for this contest. Both Ryan Smith and Zach Powell missed their first starts of the season, with Powell not even on the bench and Brad Peters also sat this one out with the subs. I had posed the question in my preview as to how important

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this match was, and the answer was clear, and understandably so. However, it was important for Camrun Zain who finally made his debut in goal after performing well for us in pre-season. He also became the first player in our club history to have a surname beginning with Z!

That said, there was still enough quality on the field to win this match. Josh Alder started ahead of Jamie Byatt, while Ben Bauchop, Oliver Thompson and Kevin Moreno-Gomez made their first starts for the club and all contributed well. We then got off to a fine start in the tenth minute when Jaevon Dyer's square ball in from the right was well dummied and Alder ran onto it and smashed the ball low past Joshua Wilson from twelve yards, although there was doubt about the goal for a few seconds as an old issue re-appeared.

Back in December 2018 we scored three goals in four matches where the ball had hit the diagonal stanchion supporting the post and bounced back into play. It had never happened before or since. Until now! At first it wasn't clear that the goal had been spotted by the referee or his Assistant, but thankfully common sense prevailed and the goal was given. Seriously though, who designs goals like this!

Anyway, Alder's goal against his former club had us in control and we continued to hold the balance of play as the half progressed. Bauchop's free kick was blocked before Alder went down in the area, only to then pick up a yellow card for simulation, which, judging by the lack of complaint from the players, appeared to be the right decision.

Alder's shot was saved easily enough by Wilson and Bauchop's next free kick was a couple of feet wide of the post. As we approached the half Alder got a toe to Dyer's ball in, but was at full stretch and was unable to direct it on target. In response the home side showed little except for a couple of long range strikes, one of which Zain had to palm away just before the break.

What we really needed in the second half was to retain a bit more control in the middle of the park, but gradually we found ourselves holding less of the possession and Dorking were level in the 55th minute after a harmless enough looking ball was played in to Mark Soares, who then lobbed the advancing Zain who watched the ball drop down and bounce up into the net for the equaliser.

The home side sent a free kick wide but we were soon back on the attack and just after the hour Alder was put through again. He cut back onto his right foot and sent a curling strike towards the far corner where Wilson made an excellent save at full stretch to tip the ball over. From the corner Dyer shot wide after the original delivery was punched clear and we then brought on Byatt and Athan Smith-Joseph in an attempt to force the win.

In reality though, neither were able to stamp their authority on proceedings and a succession of injuries and niggly fouls ensured that the contest would become broken up and lead to quite a few minutes being added on. And in the seventh minute of injury time with penalties looming, a crossfield ball over to the right wing was squared low into the six yard box where Aubrey was there to knock the delivery past Zain. There were protestations from our boys over the offside claim and the game ended with a lot of heated discussion between players and even Management as some from the home team had run on to the pitch after that late goal.

But it was too late to do anything about it and it is Dorking Wanderers B that now progress to a Quarter-Final at home to Arundel, while we still haven't won a competitive match at the new Meadowbank Stadium in six attempts. We will of course have another chance soon as we return here on 2nd January for a far more important League match.

Epsom & Ewell: Camrun Zain, Gideon Acheampong (c), Johnny "Sonic" Akoto, Nick Wilson, Aaron Bogle, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Ben Bauchop, Josh Alder, Gavin Quintyne, Kevin Moreno-Gomez

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Quintyne (73), Jamie Byatt for Alder (73), Josh Owen for Bauchop (84)

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